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MEMOIR OF HON. CYRUS ALDRICH.

BY J. F. W.

The subject of this memoir was born in Smithfield, Rhode Island, June 18th, 1808. His father's name was DEXTER ALDRICH. His mother was a Miss WHITE, a lineal descendant of PEREGRINE WHITE, the first child born after the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers. He received a limited common school education, and during his boyhood and youth worked on a farm near Smithfield. He afterwards, when a young man, adopted a sea-faring life in which he continued for several years, accumulating little besides a good stock of practical experience in the affairs of business and life.

In 1837 he concluded to try his fortune in the West, and at the age of twenty-nine emigrated to Illinois and settled at Alton. That great commonwealth, now the empire State of the West, and soon to be the third in the Union, was then suffering from a great financial depression, similar to the one which weighed with such crushing effect on our own State in '58 and '59. Business and commerce were almost at a standstill, and no other occupation offering itself, Mr. ALDRICH, too industrious and active to remain idle while any honest employment was open, worked as a day laborer on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. But this was only temporary. The managers soon found that they could do better than to employ this active and smart young stranger in an inferior position, and he was soon promoted to the place of overseer, and not long after took a contract on the same work. In 1841 his contract terminated disastrously to himself and he again resumed life as a laborer. Meantime he had resided at Springfield and Joliet.

In 1842, he removed to Galena, where he resided for several years. There he became a member of the firm of GALBRAITH, PORTER & Co., largely engaged in the stage business and mail contracts, that proved remunerative. He soon became well known in that region and was—as his personal traits of character, open and genial address, and honorable dealings always made him—very popular with all classes. On May 26th, 1845, he was married to Miss CLARA HEATON of Indiana, who was then temporarily residing at Galena, and who survives him with a son and daughter, his only living children.

In 1845 he was elected a member of the Illinois Legislature, and serving with satisfaction to his district, was re-elected the following year. At the expiration of his second term, he was tendered a nomination to the Senate, but declined, as the compensation of legislators at that time was so small that he had hitherto served at a loss to himself which he was not able to bear. During his legislative career, in Illinois, I doubt not that he worked for the interests of the State with the same energy, untiring industry and desire to promote the general welfare, that he evinced while in Congress and in our own State Legislature. In speaking of his legislative career in Illinois to the writer of this sketch, a short time before his death, he remarked that he was proud to have been a member of the session which adopted the plan for settling the old bonded indebtedness of that State, which like our own in this State, had been a source of trouble and dispute for several years, and devised means to restore her financial credit and solvency. That Mr. ALDRICH's plain, strong, common-sense and clear-headed views of business and public measures had their weight and influence in settling the knotty questions which arose while the measures were under consideration, no one who knew him, can doubt. This must have been the view of others. C. L. WILSON, editor of the Chicago *Journal*, speaking of the prominent part borne by Mr. ALDRICH in the settlement of the matter, said that "every one of his constituents should take him by the hand and say 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

In 1847 he was elected by a large majority, Register of Deeds of Jo Davies county, which position he filled for two

years. In the spring of 1849, he was appointed by President Taylor Receiver of the U. S. Land Office at Dixon, Illinois, which office he continued to fill for four years, until the incoming of Pierce's administration in 1853.

When he was appointed to this office, he removed to Dixon, where he resided until his emigration to Minnesota. In 1854 he was elected Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Dixon, and a member of the Board of Commissioners of the county of Lee.

In 1852 he received the Whig nomination for Congress in his district, and had for an opponent the well known "Long John" WENTWORTH, of Chicago. Though the district was almost hopelessly Democratic, Mr. ALDRICH worked with his well known zeal so untiringly that he well nigh turned the scale in his own favor, failing by only a few votes, having run 1,570 ahead of his ticket. He used to say that he would have been elected if he could have commanded the liberal use of means employed by his opponent.

In 1854 he visited Minnesota, then the objective point of a very heavy emigration, and being pleased with the country and its healthfulness, determined to move his home here, Minneapolis, then a mere hamlet, being the locality chosen. In the spring of 1855, he moved thither and built a commodious brick dwelling, now owned by GEO. A. BRACKETT, Esq.

In his new home he lost none of the popularity which always seemed to follow him, for indeed he had lost none of those qualities of mind and heart which always made him acquaintances easily and attached them to him so warmly. He seemed made for a party leader, and it was not long ere the Republican party, to which he was ever attached, put him forward as standard-bearer. In the spring of 1857, he was nominated as a member of the Constitutional Convention, and elected by a larger majority than any candidate on his ticket. The printed debates of the "Republican wing" of the convention show that he took a leading part during the session, and was conspicuous in pressing wise and proper views.

A few days after the conclusion of the convention, Mr. ALDRICH was nominated by the Republican Senatorial Convention, as one of the three Congressmen (the State was not then

districted.) He at once entered on a vigorous canvass, but his party was not successful in the contest. Mr. ALDRICH from his personal canvass, however, became widely known throughout Minnesota, adding largely to his popularity and creating hosts of warm, personal friends. The ensuing year, when the next election for Congressmen occurred, Mr. ALDRICH was again nominated by his party. This time he was triumphantly elected, receiving a majority of over four thousand, 1,362 of which was in his own county, the largest majority ever given by that county.

He took his seat soon after in Congress, and ably represented his State and labored faithfully for its interests. Perhaps we have never had, and never will have, a more faithful representative in Congress than CYRUS ALDRICH. He made no pretensions to brilliant ability, was no impressive orator, and in plainness of manner and personal appearance would not have been selected by a casual observer as one of the leading members; yet scarcely a member on the floor had more influence than Mr. ALDRICH. There was something winning and persuasive in his manner. It bore the impress of truth and honesty. His style of speaking was plain, forcible, convincing, even though it may have lacked rhetorical ornament. Yet he seldom bored the House with speeches. His great success lay in *work*, WORK, WORK! He perseveringly pressed his measures, in season and out of season, and by his personal influence—that influence which a square, honorable, earnest man always has—accomplished his ends. No matter entrusted to him by his constituents was ever neglected by him. The humblest man in his district never wrote him a letter, asking a favor or for some information, in vain. He was certain of receiving a prompt, courteous answer, and if his request could be granted, it was secured. Thus Mr. ALDRICH's time was very fully occupied. His correspondence was very large. His opponents used to sneer at him as the "letter writer." I now record the fact to his credit and honor.

When his first term expired, (1860) Mr. ALDRICH was nominated without opposition, and elected by an overwhelming majority, 10,500, even larger than the vote Abraham Lincoln received on the same ticket. He returned to his seat in Con-

gress with a consciousness of duty well performed and well appreciated.

This was a trying term. The rebellion assumed shape and finally culminated in war. Our First Regiment of immortal fame, was called into the field, and remained near Washington for several months. This laid on Mr. ALDRICH new duties and labors. He felt a peculiar interest in the regiment and its welfare. His warm, sympathetic, kindly nature found a field for its active exercise. He was with the regiment whenever his duties at Washington permitted. The poor, sick or wounded soldier found in him a sympathetic and active friend, always ready with the cheering word, or liberal purse to minister to his wants. He would patiently frank "soldiers' letters" by the hundred, or write letters for the invalids in the hospital, and in a hundred ways bestowed on them those gentle and tender benefactions that only a generous heart could have conceived and executed, but which were of priceless value to the poor, despondent, suffering soldier. He seemed never to tire in his devotion to the "boys" of the First Regiment, and it is undeniable that his devotion to them seriously injured his health and perhaps shortened his life, while it is equally true that his unceasing generosity impaired his fortune and produced embarrassment that compelled him to sacrifice valuable property at home. But he has left "a monument more enduring than brass." His name, always mentioned with respect by every one in his own State, is now almost sacred in thousands of grateful hearts of the surviving members of the First Regiment, their relations, and indeed every patriotic citizen of our State.

In 1862, he was urged to accept the nomination for Congressman again, but declined to do so by the advice of his friends, at whose solicitation he ran for U. S. Senator during the Legislature of 1863, but was not successful. This fact was more regretted by others than by himself, as during his public life his private affairs had become much involved, and needed his personal care and attention, while his health had also suffered to some extent from over-exertion, and he was very glad to retire from public service to restore both. He did, however, accept from President LINCOLN, who had been for many years a warm personal friend of his, an appointment as

one of the Commissioners to examine claims for Indemnity to sufferers by the Sioux raid. This was a difficult and embarrassing position to hold; but he executed the trust without detriment to the rights of either party.

Mr. ALDRICH was one of the corporators of the Northern Pacific Railroad, an enterprise in which he felt much interest, and labored vigorously to get it started.

In 1864, he yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and was elected to the House of Representatives of the Minnesota Legislature of 1865. He here served his constituents and the State with his old energy and fidelity. In the spring of 1865 he was elected Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the town, the last position to which he was elected by popular vote.

In 1867, without any solicitations on his part, and unexpectedly to him, he was appointed Postmaster of Minneapolis, an office which he filled with satisfaction to all until the spring of 1871, a term of four years, when his successor was appointed.

During his residence in Minneapolis, no man worked harder for its advancement than he. He was ever ready to give labor or means in any public enterprise, and whenever a subscription paper was circulated for any worthy object, the name of CYRUS ALDRICH was sure to be found on it for a liberal amount. His community could have lost no one more true to her interests, nor whom they could have more illy spared.

After retiring from the office of postmaster, he withdrew as far as possible from all active business. His health was gradually failing, and the evening of a well spent life was passed in his family, quietly and serenely. He calmly awaited the approach of his end, which he felt was near at hand, but he was

> "—Sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust—"

in the mercy and goodness of his Heavenly Father. Kind friends and loving relatives ministered to his wants and smoothed his pathway to the tomb. Religion came to him with its soothing consolations. He believed and was baptised in the faith. His mind was remarkably clear, and he even gave directions for his funeral and selected his own pall bearers.

On the 5th of October, 1871, his eyes closed forever on this world.

His death created general sorrow in the community where he was so well known and so much beloved. Perhaps the death of no other citizen could have been so sincerely lamented. He had not an enemy among the many thousands who knew him. His remains were interred in Lakewood Cemetery on Sunday, October the 8th. This funeral was one of the largest that has ever occurred in the State. It seemed as if nearly the entire community were in attendance. The Masonic Order, the Fire Department, and other civic bodies were in the procession, while an immense concourse followed on foot and in carriages. The funeral services took place at the Universalist church, where Rev. Dr. TUTTLE, the pastor, preached a touching sermon. It so strikingly sketches Col. ALDRICH'S character, that I can do no better than close this hasty and imperfect sketch by quoting part of it:

"Col. ALDRICH was, during most of his years, a public man. From the time he emigrated from Rhode Island to the State of Illinois, over thirty years ago, up to near the time of his death, there were not half a dozen years in which he was not doing service for the public. He was therefore brought in contact with a large number of our most distinguished men and became thoroughly conversant with nearly all the measures and interests which agitated courts, legislatures and the United States Congress. His opportunities for doing good, then, for serving the institutions for which he cherished always a patriotic pride, were exceedingly great. He used these opportunities with conspicuous fidelity. If he was ever charged with appropriating moneys that were not his, of subverting his office in any scheme of corruption, that charge never reached my ears. I have never known a public man, a man who like him had stemmed long and often the current of party opposition, whom the common speech of community treated more kindly, whose reputation for fair and honorable dealing, for resisting bribery, for keeping square accounts, was better protected from severe criticism.

"The deeds which longer than all others, perhaps, will keep his memory fresh in the hearts of his surviving fellow citizens,

and which will embalm his name in loving gratitude among the people of this State, are those which he performed in aid of our soldiers during the late rebellion. Many, very many, are the touching incidents which might be related of his true, earnest, patriotic devotion during those perilous times—of the way he emptied his pockets to aid the cause. But why should I dwell upon these things, and before you who saw his unselfishness, who were daily witnesses of his patriotic sacrifices, who know better than I, how all the soldiers loved and honored him, how gratefully they mentioned his name and treasured in their heart of hearts his friendly counsels and deeds of sympathy.

"He was unusually tender hearted, sympathetic and generous. He was quick to perceive the wants of his fellow men, and ever ready and willing to render all the aid in his power. He was especially kind to the poor. Perhaps there was no one in our city, of his means and of his cares, who listened more attentively to tales of poverty and suffering, and made greater sacrifices to afford the relief that was asked. It was a pleasure for him to do his neighbors a kindness—indeed, his every day life was filled with kindness, with kind words and with all those genial manners and easy courtesies which mark a noble and generous mind.

"For fifteen years his form has been a familiar sight in Minneapolis, and his name was associated with most of your city interests. This great gathering, to-day, of his friends and neighbors and acquaintances, is a better attestation of the very high esteem in which he was held in this community than any words of mine can be.

"The deceased was thoroughly aware several weeks ago that his life was drawing to a close. He sent for me, and in a very deliberate manner affirmed his convictions concerning the approaching dissolution, and told me quite minutely of his wishes in regard to the funeral, &c. Subsequently he sent for me again, and requested me to pray with him and to administer to him the rights of baptism and the communion. He seemed to be profoundly impressed and comforted by these solemn services. I saw him at other times, and at his request offered prayer. He expressed a desire to live—to have a few years

more to enjoy with his family, and to complete some objects he had in view, if such a thing could be; but he did not complain or rebel against the decree of Providence. He conversed often and freely and calmly, even cheerfully and hopefully, with his family in regard to his departure, and made every necessary arrangement. His mind was clear and sound to the last. He suffered much, but murmured very little. His distress increased so much, finally, and his weariness was so great that he longed to go and be at rest. The closing moments were short and without much apparent pain. He fell asleep easily and peacefully."

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